SENATE RESEARCH COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Meeting of Monday, November 26, 1992
Room GM 403-2, 12:00

Present: P. Bird, A. Braun (recording sect'y.), T. Bui (Chair), A. Homzy, A.B. Ibrahim, P. Lightbown, K. Lipke, D. Markiewicz, C. Nero, T.S. Sankar, P. Shizgal, C. Suen, K. Thulasiraman, A. Williams

Absent: A. Zaidi

Regrets: U. de Brentani, S. Chowdhury

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1. Approval of Agenda.

Motion to approve the agenda was made by P. Shizgal, seconded by P. Lightbown. All were in favour.

2. Approval of Minutes of the November 09, 1992 meeting.

A. Ibrahim pointed out that under item 7 (Capital Campaign), the end of line four should read: The Faculty of Commerce has tried for this in the past... Motion to approve the Minutes with change was made by A. Ibrahim, seconded by C. Nero. Minutes were approved by all present.

3. Report of the Chair.

Nothing to report.

4. Report of the Director, Office of Research Services.

AJW will be late. No report was given.

5. FCAR Plan Triennal 1992-1995 (sent under seperate cover).

The most important section is #3. The Chair received comments from U. de Brentani. Copies of her comments were distributed. Her comments are very constructive.

P. Shizgal says that the focus has to do with funding issues. One of the problems is the overlapping of the centre and team competitions. Team competition was originally conceived as a for providing operating funds. It began to resemble the centre competition. It was revealed that people were being funded twice for the same thing. There is no significant long term program of funding independent scientific research.

Both FCAR and FRSQ fund medical research. Where are the borders between these agencies? Biomedical research, for example, is a strong sector. If research is carried out in a hospital, that is FRSQ's mandate. If within the university, it's FCAR's. He doesn't know what the implications could be in terms of future politics. In terms of the overlap of centre and teams, we currently have a situation where when a centre comes up for renewal, if it's members hold team grants, the centre will see a decrease in funding. FCAR is proposing to move away from such a policy. About 50% of the centres include people who hold team grants. Teams are organized to put resources together to attack specific problems.

It seems that the largest proportion of FCAR team grants is in the area of Physical and Natural Sciences, an area in which Québec has not traditionally done very well in Ottawa. Québec's proportion of NSERC funds is very low in comparison to Ontario's. In the case of medical areas, we have almost the same slice of the MRC as Ontario researchers do. In the area of humanities, it seems that the total proportion of funds is low, but proportion drawn by researchers in Québec is close to National norms. Relatively, few centres in the areas of Social Sciences and Humanities. A few years ago, in the evaluation of centres grants, they grouped proposals according to sector. Despite this, the ratio of funding of centres has not changed that much. This may be due to the way people organize research work in different areas.

The **Chair** noted that with regard to biomedical research, there is an agreement between FCAR and FRSQ on two issues:

1- Funding of projects and researchers working in hospitals: FCAR will no longer fund these; FRSQ will.

2- Graduate students fellowships: In the past, both agencies have given support to graduates. Now, FCAR is taking over. He thinks this is a good move. He was told by FCAR that this has been implemented. About 8 months ago there was a document sent by FRSQ regarding these matters.

How will this document affect **Concordia University** in terms of the areas and disciplines (Engineering, Medical Sciences, Biomedicine, Social Sciences)?

C. Nero asked what is the difference between the table on page 64 with that of page 65 (Tables 2 and 3). What is the difference of distribution in these funding types? The Tables seem to be broken up in different ways.

P. Shizgal noted that Table 2 lists the granting programs, and Table 3 lists the scholarship programs. Scholarships are given on basis of merit to individual students to pursue their studies; grants on the basis of scientific excellence and involvement with students to groups of researchers. They don't interrelate and are separate budgets.

The **Chair** explained that most of the time, when money comes into a team, a large percentage of the budget is used to pay for graduate students. There are students receiving scholarships directly from agencies.

K. Thulasiraman asked for clarification of page 51 where there is mention of masters and doctorate and post-doctorate fellowships. Is there anything significant?

The **Chair** stated that the only significant thing that is mentioned concerns an increase in graduate students' stipends.

K. Thulasiraman then asked if the strategic areas mentioned on page 42 referred to international cooperation.

The **Chair** answered that these areas are listed as priorities in Québec. He then referred to the document which was received from U. de Brentani. She points out concerns on funding of graduate students. It drops from 341 in 1988-89, to 268 1992-93. The percentage of total applicants who received funding declined from 26.1% to 15.8%. This point should be brought to the delegation's attention.

P. Shizgal would like to move to global issues. FCAR presents their mission as complementary to the activity of the federal funding councils. In the past they veered from federal fundings. FCAR said we want to build a scientific base in Québec in an original way. First, fund people who work in groups, which creates a scientific environment. Emphasize student training and working in groups. Federal agencies are using this also now. Where is the growth in federal budget agency? Huge amounts of money are tied up in the centres of excellence. All of the growth in the NSERC budget is going into a collaborative research program. It would seem that the overlaps in FCAR's activities and the federal council's have gone up.

The support of basic research is going down. Federal council is flat when it comes to basic research. There was a time when FCAR wanted to see research in as many Québec departments as possible. Now, the growth is entirely outside the basic research programmes. Politicians are hostile to individual research. Part of the committee's job is to educate politicians that the basis of academic research is basic research driven by scholarly priorities. This point should be made any time a granting agency comes.

When a study is done about what stimulates job creation in the economic world, it shows that you need highly qualified personnel. This requires a healthy research establishment. You can't do this by deciding beforehand what the scientific priorities of tomorrow are going to be. We should encourage them to include early on to make a powerful statement about basic research as the foundation for everything else. On page 4, they talk about *intensification des centres dans des secteurs clefs*. He feels that it is extremely important that there be some counter weight which says that the basic research has to be healthy.

The **Chair** was also concerned about this. This is a problem because in many areas, important discoveries are not made by team but by individual research. There is a trend to try to integrate individual researchers into a team.

T. Sankar agrees with the **Chair**. Somehow, politicians have not understood the whole process of research, nor the role of the university in terms of increasing knowledge. Without basic research there is no applied research. He feels that it's important to emphasize a conceptual action from Québec. Strategy must be to not only speak about it as researchers but also as individuals who lead research. Collectively, he feels that position has to be stated by the universities by someone in a high level position. The trend is alarming and we must speak now. It is happening in the U.S. and we are following. In Japan, the system is quite different. This matter should be brought up when meeting with the FCAR delegation.

The **Chair** said that the Minutes of the previous SRC meeting state that he received a document entitled *L'avenir scientifique et technologique de la grande région de Montréal* produced by an Ad-hoc Task Force Committee of CITEC, in which there are a number of recommendations, some related to university research. They contain specific statements regarding fundamental research. This document was received by all government agencies. He will extract the recommendations and circulate to members. He will also bring up this issue to CREPUQ for discussion.

P. Bird commented about young researchers being diverted into areas of lesser interest to them. He thinks that departments tend to hire people with the possibility of becoming parts of teams.

K. Thulasiraman said that there was danger in that teaching duties remain the same and then research activities program increase rapidly because of new programs. We are now adding to this the collaborative research program as well as other types of programs. What he suspects is that scientific leaders will likely not have much time to lead.

D. Markiewicz said that this issue has to be addressed. There are hidden expenses which are not covered. If agencies are going to be pushing this, it should be incorporated in the overall plan.

C. Nero sees problems with a lack of commitment to basic research as well as focus on team and centre research as opposed to individual research. Do both need to be stressed as fundamentals?

P. Shizgal sees this budget as a 'hold the line budget' with no growth, depending on economic recovery and inflation and could actually be a decreasing budget. We have to be careful to get into dangerous waters. The other side is a double message. We are grateful to FCAR. However, reorientation may be due.

C. Suen finds that they have emphasized collaboration between researchers and teams. In cases, there are very strong individuals. He wondered whether the new document has anything to do with true collaboration of research.

The **Chair** assumes that all teams supported by FCAR will collaborate.

D. Markiewicz said that differences in terms of sectorial success and disciplinary success have been discussed. One of the concerns that was raised is that the criteria for support may be biased against certain disciplines. She was asked to discuss some of the differences in disciplines and how to adjust. The whole notion of what is collaboration is very different depending on the discipline. Is there evidence of collaboration in teams? It may be that there is a lot of collaboration which doesn't demonstrate itself. This may be a good time to continue to push and redefine what is a team and what is collaboration.

What are implications of this document? As associate dean, she is concerned about possible implications with graduate students. One question has to do with where to put the bulk of funding? One of the proposals is to put most of the monies into funding Ph.D. students instead of Master's. There could be serious problems for Graduate Students. We are an institution which still has many departments which have no Ph.D. programs. If we want to adopt this complementary issue, we could discourage putting all funding at the doctorate level. She understands that this is a minor issue but it could have serious implications.

The **Chair** noted that this issue will be discussed with students before they meet with the delegation.

The **Chair** then asked committee members their views on how they see this document with regards to the listed disciplines.

P. Shizgal thinks that the accord with FRSQ is promising. It has been very difficult for various groups. He felt that the reversal of policy of penalizing centres if their members hold team grants is also good. He thinks that the bottom line looks financially very tough. It says between the lines that you will get less money. Basically, the message is if there is any turn around, additional money could be well spent.

T. Sankar compared the document with the free trade agreement. He's not sure how this is applicable on the axis of research development. He wants to re-emphasize the point that in terms of support for graduate students, the numbers are disturbing. Particularly that they have now taken over the student support of FRSQ. If you have no support for masters level, you won't have enough people to compete.

P. Lightbown was unclear on what was the source of information on page 4 about the decrease of funding available for graduate students.

D. Markiewicz noted that if overall funding for the fellowships stays the same as per capita support goes up, it means number of graduate students receiving fellowship will go down.

P. Lightbown suggested to look at the tables carefully. If figures are not correct, there may be some inconsistencies.

T. Sankar said that these numbers apply each year.

A.J. Williams points out that information is in table 9. Success rate went way down.

P. Lightbown had one more comment regarding individual versus group research. One way that something positive may be said about individual research in the document is that with the decision not to tie supplements to nouveaux chercheurs, there is less pressure on the team. That way, a person can receive individual funding and can keep going on his own. With that in mind, extend the initial period of individual research.

P. Lightbown asked if it was still true that external evaluators are expected to read proposals and give their assessment in french? It is clearly a problem in some fields.

P. Shizgal suggested to submit the same application in english and in french, english version not being official, with a cover letter stating that the official version is the french one. One sentence on the front page should read that the english version is on file at the FCAR office. They have been willing to let this pass.

A.J. Williams says it depends on the disciplines. Some committees may not be fluent in one or the other language.

D. Markiewicz said that in her experience on comité 05, 5%-20% of proposals to FCAR are written in english.

A. Homzy doesn't see the words Fine Arts in the document and feels left out. Where does Fine Arts fit in the larger picture.

The **Chair** suggested that he bring up comments at the meeting with the delegates. They will speak french but english questions will be O.K.

A. Homzy won't be there. He asked the Chairman of the Music department to take his place.

It was noted that there were no FCAR team grants in Fine Arts.

6. The Capital Campaign.

Reason to bring this back is that the document was discussed then a one page response was to be sent to SCAPP. He did not have time to do it. He needs volunteers to help putting together the response before X-mas. T. Sankar, and K. Thulasiraman will help.

7. Varia.

Nothing.

8. Adjournment.

Meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:15 p.m. Next meeting January 22, 1992 at 2:00 p.m.